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Subject: Docket No. FAA-99-5483-19

The following are my comments on Docket No. FAA-1999-5483; Notice No. 99-03

I have some comments that affect several sections of the various documents and some addressing specific sections.

#### General Areas

##### Parachute Packing

The proposal is to clarify who is authorized to pack a main parachute. The proposed change would clarify the current practice of using a ?paid packer?. With the proposed change a ?paid packer? must pack under the supervision of a certificated rigger. I totally support this proposal when it comes to packing Tandems or packing for students. However, if "supervision" is taken to mean take responsibility for the pack job, then why not allow a packer to pack under the "supervision" of a rigger or the person making the jump. FYI I do not use packers. In 19 years of jumping except as a student I have jumped rigs not packed by me less than 10 times, but I still feel that the person jumping the rig should be able to make their own decision as to who packs the rig. Every experienced jumper has their own preferences on how their parachute should be packed. This information is provided to the packer by the jumper not by any rigger.

##### Accident Reporting Requirements

I feel that accident reporting would be useful to the sport. My only problem is with the definition of a serious accident and how do you enforce that ?the parachutist involved must report the accident?. What I read implies that a broken leg would be considered a serious accident. I know of several situations where a broken leg has occurred and no one at the skydiving center has ever known about it. The skydiver went to the emergency room and then returned home out of state. I think your comments about a serious accident being determined based on length of hospital stay is in the right direction.

##### Section-by-Section Discussion of the Proposals

In addition to the general areas discussed above I have some comments about a couple of specific changes.

##### Section 105.15 item (7)

It states that any request for authorization requires ?The registration number of the aircraft to be used?. This OK when a NOTAM is being filed but when a request for a demo occurs several days in advance which aircraft is going to be used may not yet be known.

##### Section 105.43

In this section I have several areas of comment

##### Item (a)

See comments above about Parachute Packing. Also how does one know or enforce that the main has been packed within 120 days. Why have rules

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that can not be enforced?

Item (b) (1)

I feel that this would be the appropriate time to update this section to extend the repack cycle to something beyond 120 days. There have been many recorded instances, some as controlled test, where reserves that have been packed much longer than 120 days have worked with no problems. Some other countries have longer repack cycles and there have not been any reported problems. I know one of the arguments against a longer repack cycle list examples of riggers finding major problems with reserves when turned in for a repack. They state this as an example of a need for the shorter repack cycle so that these problems could be found sooner. The other side of the coin is that if I had not had to have my reserve repacked the last time, the problem would have never been introduced in the first place. Reserve manufactures have also been reporting that the life of a reserve is more dependent on the number of repacks than anything else. The fewer repacks the better the quality of my reserve. From this I feel that if I use a reliable rigger my system will be safer with less repacks.

Item (b) (3)

I find this item on maintenance of an automatic activation device as the most objectional item in all of the proposed changes.

I am against the manufacturer of my AAD (I have 2 from 2 different manufacturers) having carte blanche to force me into any maintenance they would like. It is felt that today some of the maintenance schedules for AADs are simply to lessen the liability exposure for the manufacturer, not that there is any strong evidence that these schedules are really required by the equipment. What checks and balance system would be able to prevent the manufacture from simply wanting to increase their revenue and require additional maintenance. If there is a known problem with a particular piece of equipment that would endanger the normal operation of my reserve, I am willing to support a recall procedure for corrective action similar to what happens today when a piece of equipment is found defective such as the current Vector cut away housing problem.

The initial cost of AADs though high I am willing to accept as a long term investment. Some of the maintenance schedules do not make sense and add significantly to the cost. Test camber testing at every repack. This usually requires express shipment to and from the test facility in addition to the test cost. New batteries at 2 and 4 year periods. If I did not use the system for a year and did not get my batteries replaced until the 3 year date. I still have to get them replaced one year later at the 4 year date. Why?? This is even if the self checking system says the batteries are good. How does an AAD with out of date batteries, or turned off, affect whether my reserve will work for emergency use as demonstrated during the TSO evaluation. My AAD is not a TSO'd piece of equipment. My reserve is TSO'd and my container is TSO'd and the manufacture of my container has specified how an AAD is to be mounted in my container. There are no standards for the manufacturing of an AAD. Until there are enforced standards for the design and manufacture of AADs I am against any enforced maintenance schedule.

Allowing these types of "maintenance schedules" to have the force of law scares me. If I were to follow all of the "maintenance schedules" to the letter I would hate to think how much that would add to the cost of a jump. I only make about 130 jumps per year. This added cost may require me to remove at least one of my AADs. Am I safer with my AAD

removed? There was a death in NY state at the end of May 99. This jumper use to have an AAD installed. He requested his rigger to remove it shortly after the manufacture increased the maintenance schedule. Was he safer without an AAD?

I do not have a big objection to requiring AAD maintenance on equipment used on Tandems or student rigs. Since in these circumstances the Tandem passenger or student is not knowledgeable as to the operation of AADs and therefore is not in a good position to make an informed decision

Section 105.49 Item (4) (a)

There is no comment allowing the main to be packed by a packer.

#### Summary

I feel changes to rules should be made for two reasons. If it has been shown that there is a problem with the current rules then they should be changed. If the technology and/or normal practices of the sport have changed rules need to be reviewed to be brought in line with those changes. Accident reporting and communicating with other organizations may need improvement because of the increased level of parachuting activity. Normal practices have changed who packs main parachutes. The technology associated with reserves has greatly improved in the 19 years I have been jumping and should be reviewed. AADs have been around for over **20** years and have had manufacture recommended maintenance schedules. I have had my AAD fail (15 Yrs ago) with no significant problem. The most common AAD failures are: 1. Not fire when expected. 2. Fire when not expected. The not firing when expected situation has no effect on the normal operation of my TSO'd reserve and since the AAD is strictly a backup devise does not add to the normal risk. Firing when not expected can cause an early deployment or a two canopy out situation. Both of these do have a slight increase in risk. However I have seen AAD misfires that have occurred within days of having the AAD serviced by the manufacture. The quality of AADs has improved over the years and would imply less of a need for regulation not more unless it is felt that manufacturing standards need to be developed.

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